



Resolution # HLT-2023-01

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF EQUITABLE HEALTH CARE SERVICES FOR PUERTO RICO AND THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Whereas, Puerto Rico, since 1898, and U.S. Virgin Islands, since 1917 have been U.S. organized territories without independent sovereignty; and,

Whereas, Puerto Ricans and U.S. Virgin Islanders are citizens of the United States of America, yet do not enjoy equal health care opportunities and services comparable to mainland citizens; and,

Whereas, they are subjected to more rigid spending constraints and lower reimbursement rates for health care services than states; and,

Whereas, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands have different programmatic benefits - - capped federal funding, incomplete mandatory Medicaid benefits, lack of Medicare cost-sharing assistance, and no Medicare prescription drug subsidy -- when compared to the states; and,

Whereas, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have longstanding health care delivery system and fiscal challenges made worse by recent natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic; and,

Whereas, recent natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands worsened problematic social factors - poverty, lack of job opportunities, poor health education, and lack of physical activity and,

Whereas, the citizens of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have significant health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, mental health issues, and cancer --often exceeding those in the 50 states; and,

Whereas, Puerto Ricans and U.S. Virgin Islanders who move back to these territories after living in any U.S. state lose access to the same programs and quality of care enjoyed in mainland states; and,

Whereas, social services impacting health, such as Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), and Aid for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled, are not available or severely limited in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands; and,

Whereas, these disparities in health care access and quality have especially detrimental effects on older adults and individuals with disabilities living in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands; now,

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that CSG East supports the creation of more equitable policies to support the health and healthcare system of the almost 3.5 million U.S. citizens who reside in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands; and,

Be It Further Resolved, that CSG East request the U.S. Congress to exercise its constitutional authority to make rules and regulations for the territories to provide equal treatment for U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands regarding health and social services; and,

Be It Further Resolved, that CSG East request that the Congress and the Department of Health and Human Services propose and enact changes to Section 1108 of the Social Security Act to align federally subsidized programs and funding for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands with those of the mainland states; and,

Be It Further Resolved, that CSG East send copies of this resolution to the U. S. Congress Senate and House leaders, the Secretary the U.S. of Department of Health and Human Services, the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and the legislative and executive branches of government in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands.